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SENIOR WASHINGTON SPECIAL ACTIONS GROUP MEETING

Wednesday, November 24, 1971

Time and Place: 9:29 - 10:05 a.m., White House Situation Room

Subject: South Asia

Participants:

Chairman - Henry A. Kissinger

JCS - Adm. Thomas H. Moorer
Capt. Howard N. Kay

State - John N. Irwin II
Joseph Sisco
Samuel DePalma
Christopher Van Hollen
Bruce Laingen

AID - Donald MacDonald

NSC - Brig. Gen. Alexander M. Haig
Staff Harold H. Saunders
Col. Thomas C. Pinckney
Samuel Hoskinson
Jeanne W. Davis

Defense - David Packard
Armistead Selden
James H. Noyes

CIA - Lt. Gen. Robert E. Cushman
John Waller

NSC, NSA, DOS
review complete
per C03233156

OSD and JCS
reviews completed

Mr. Kissinger: (to Cushman) What is the situation?

Gen. Cushman: We still have conflicting Pakistan and Indian versions of the action, but there is little doubt that regular Indian troops have entered Pakistan.

Mr. Kissinger: Is there any doubt? How long can they maintain this charade?

Gen. Cushman: There's no doubt in my mind.

Mr. Packard: They call it "protective reaction."

Mr. Kissinger: There's no doubt in my mind what is meant by "protective reaction."

Mr. Sisco: Mrs. Gandhi's statement yesterday didn't deny that Indian troops had crossed the border. There's no doubt in my mind that they have.

Gen. Cushman: There is no doubt for our purposes, but it is questionable whether we could prove it in the UN.

Mr. Irwin: The question, also, is how the troops are being used. 25X1

Mr. Kissinger: Why do we have no independent intelligence?

Mr. Kissinger: Why can't we find out more?

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Mr. Kissinger: Is there any doubt in the mind of anyone in this room that the Indians have attacked with regular units across the Pakistan border? And if there is, does it make any difference? Can we possibly believe that these are guerrillas attacking across hundreds of miles, with tanks and aircraft -- that this is an indigenous movement?

Mr. DePalma: There is no question that these forces are armed and supplied from the outside, but we can't make an airtight case in the UN.

Mr. Kissinger: The question is what hard data we have to support whatever action we want to take. We have no doubt that India is involved and that they are probably across the border. But we need something to nail down the exact nature of their activity and we need it in a day or two.

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Adm. Moorer: They may be making a distinction between their regular forces and their border security forces.

Mr. Irwin: (to Moorer) What do you think their purpose is? Are they trying to cut off supplies? Are they primarily supporting the Bangla Desh guerrillas, or are they planning to go further? Are they putting forces in to take and hold territory or to protect the Bangla Desh?

Adm. Moorer: Initially to support the Bangla Desh, and then to whip hell out of the Pakistanis. The Bangla Desh are moving to the border where the Indians can assist in attriting the Paks.

Mr. Kissinger: So our situation is that we don't know enough now to do anything, and by the time they are in Dacca, it will be too late to do anything. In these circumstances, we should move early rather than later, since if we are late, any move we make will be ineffectual. That is our dilemma.

Mr. Packard: We should also think about the steps we could take. We have sent the messages to the Ambassadors for the approaches to the Foreign Ministers.

Mr. Kissinger: Have we any answers?

Mr. Sisco: Farland couldn't get in to see Sultan Khan.

Mr. Kissinger: How about India?

Mr. Sisco: No reply, yet.

Mr. Packard: The first thing we can do is escalate to a higher level. We will also get the reaction from our telegram on possible UN activity.

Adm. Moorer: I personally am confident that Indian forces are inside the East Pakistan border, but I don't think they have the drive to penetrate deeply.

Mr. Irwin: They can cut two vital supply routes with only a short penetration. They haven't done it yet, though.

Adm. Moorer: They don't have enough forces for a deep penetration. I think they're trying to open up the Paks so the guerrillas can defeat them. The Paks have only a limited reinforcement capability. The Indian Navy could prevent reinforcement.

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Mr. Kissinger: (to Sisco) What do you think?

Mr. Sisco: From the Indian point of view, I think this is a substantial probe in force with both a political and a military objective. The political objective is to increase pressure on Yahya in terms of dealing with Mujib. The military objective is to increase the strength of the insurrection. I don't think the Indians have made any decision in terms of this being a prelude to something more militarily.

From Yahya's point of view, he shows every evidence of wanting to wash his hands of the situation. I think his immediate objective is to proceed with the elections and then to turn the situation over to Bhutto. Once Bhutto takes over, whatever slim possibility exists of a reconciliation between West and East Pakistan is reduced considerably. The Bengalis have always been willing to deal with Yahya but not with Bhutto. Indeed, Bhutto was the primary problem in the trouble in March. Bhutto's sole objective is to achieve power -- in all of Pakistan if he can, but, at least, in the West.

Mr. Kissinger: But he has it.

Mr. Sisco: I mean literal power. He will have it if the election schedule goes forward. Yahya is willing to go ahead and dump the problem in Bhutto's lap. If this happens the possibility of reconciliation is reduced.

Mr. Kissinger: Do you seriously believe India wants a reconciliation? Don't they control the situation?

Mr. Sisco: In answer to your first question, no, I don't. I was merely stating one option -- the transfer of the problem by Yahya to Bhutto. Another option is for Yahya to deal with Mujib directly.

Mr. Kissinger: Why can't Bhutto deal with Mujib?

Mr. Sisco: He might, but there is considerably less prospect of success. Not only are the Bengalis very reluctant to deal with Bhutto, but Bhutto and Mujib are potential rivals. The likelihood of a Mujib/Bhutto reconciliation is considerably less than the Bengalis agreeing to talk to Yahya.

Mr. Kissinger: But that assumes that the difficulty is between East and West Pakistan. Nothing India has done indicates that they want to see a reconciliation between East and West Pakistan.

Mr. Sisco: I don't think Mujib's objective in March was complete separatism or independence. Even now I don't think some form of loose confederation

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between Yahya and Mujib is impossible.

Mr. Kissinger: So, India having attack Pakistan, the logical conclusion is that we should squeeze Yahya to talk to Mujib. What Indian troops can't achieve, we should achieve for them. That's the implication of what you're saying.

Mr. Sisco: I have asked myself why the Pakistanis haven't already moved into the UN. It would seem to be very attractive to them, particularly since they are the weaker power and there is a possibility that the UN could dampen the immediate military situation. But, to be a reality, the Security Council would have to defuse the situation and would immediately get into the question of political accommodation. If Yahya is not able to move toward Mujib directly, why should he not use the UN as a facade?

Mr. Kissinger: Unless he doesn't want to do it at all.

Mr. Sisco: I agree. He has three options: do it directly with Mujib; do it through the UN; don't do it at all. If East and West Pakistan can't get together, the U. S. can live with an independent East Pakistan.

Mr. Kissinger: We don't give a damn.

Mr. Sisco: However, Yahya, by going to the UN will have internationalized a situation which he has maintained is an internal matter. In these circumstances he would be forced to deal with Mujib.

Mr. Kissinger: Does anyone seriously believe India wants a reconciliation between East and West Pakistan?

Mr. Sisco: I believe India would be willing to go along if Mujib were restored to power by peaceful means. India doesn't want war. If Mujib were back in power, he would organize an East Pakistan Government and it wouldn't be long before it was a separate entity or independent. However, Mujib, in a confederal tie with West Pakistan, would have as much fly-paper attraction for the West Bengalis as would an independent East Pakistan.

Mr. Kissinger: You say that a chance of reconciliation exists more under Yahya than under Bhutto. Therefore, the four weeks before Yahya turns over to Bhutto must be used.

Mr. Sisco: I say they could be used. If power is turned over to Bhutto we will have more war in the subcontinent. The Indians have the upper hand -- they will get East Pakistan one way or another. What are our interests?

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Maybe we can live with a war for three or four weeks. We won't become involved, and I don't think the Russians or Chinese will either. But we don't want one power to dominate in the area, and the defeat of Pakistan would certainly strengthen the Soviet position.

Mr. Kissinger: You say an opportunity exists to use Yahya to get a reconciliation. But we know that any reconciliation won't last since Mujib will go separatist in any event. We tell the Pakistanis "let's have a reconciliation." Then we tell the Indians "why fight, since you are going to get it anyway." Yahya may say "if we're going to lose anyway, why me? Why not Bhutto?"

Mr. Sisco: Maybe it doesn't make any difference. If we stay out of it, the situation will evolve by military means rather than peaceful means.

Mr. Kissinger: That's a phony. Everyone is for peaceful means, but do you honestly believe there is any chance of getting India to desist militarily? If the situation were reversed and Pakistani troops were moving into India, the New York Times, Washington Post and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee would be committing mass hara-kari, and there would be marches on Washington. When you say we should work for a peaceful settlement, are we going to help India grab what they want? Maybe we should, but don't say we have the choice of peace or war.

Mr. Sisco: But India has the upper hand -- they are stronger than Pakistan. I have not put this in terms of choosing.

Mr. Kissinger: What do you recommend we do?

Mr. Sisco: We should do nothing for the moment.

Mr. Kissinger: The President, the Secretary of State and I have told the Indians there will be consequences if they start a war.

Mr. Packard: But what can we do? I don't see that we have any effective leverage on India.

Mr. Kissinger: We can cut off aid. We can move diplomatically.

Mr. Packard: Fine -- we should, but with what likelihood of success? We don't know. One alternative would be to back up the Pakistanis, but we have to evaluate the chance of success and the price of failure.

Mr. Kissinger: We don't have to back up the Paks. It's not outrageous to ask that Yahya be given four weeks to try to adjust the political situation in East Pakistan. What is India doing other than pressing an attack on East Pakistan with a view to settling the hash of West Pakistan?

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Mr. Sisco: I agree.

Mr. Kissinger: And we haven't mentioned China. What will the the effect if, the first time something like this happens where China is involved, the U.S. doesn't make some move. You (to Sisco) say we have two choices -- do nothing or press Yahya to release Mujib.

Mr. Sisco: No. We still have a heavy cannon to use with India. We have shot one cannon in the approach to the Foreign Minister. But we are limited in what we can do.

Mr. Irwin: We could raise the level of the approach to the Prime Minister, or we could cut off aid. State doesn't think we should cut off aid right now.

Mr. Kissinger: When should we do it? If the Indians go deeper, you will say it's too late.

Mr. Packard: We can watch the situation carefully and should have a better fix in a day or two.

Mr. Kissinger: Did we get the State paper on military aid?

Mr. Saunders: We got a paper from the Pentagon but not from State.

Mr. Kissinger: Why not?

Mr. Irwin: We did a paper and had a two-hour meeting with the Secretary on it yesterday. He asked that it be expanded, which is being done, and it will come over to you.

Mr. Kissinger: You can't accuse the White House of acting unilaterally, if you don't get your papers here. We will meet tomorrow.

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